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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 012159

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: CHECHEN PRESIDENCY: KADYROV SAYS HE HAS PUTIN'S
NOD

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Classified By: PolMinCouns Alice Wells. Reason 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Ramzan Kadyrov said privately that Putin has told him he will name Kadyrov President of Chechnya before the end of the year. Dagestani Duma Member Gadzhi Makhachev (protect) told us November 1 that Kadyrov revealed this to him in a conversation at Kadyrov's Bayram ('Id al-Fitr) party in Gudermes, Chechnya. Kadyrov told Makhachev that current Chechen President Alu Alkhanov will be given "a nice post" in Moscow. Makhachev believes the inauguration will take place in January, 2007.

¶2. (C) Makhachev said that Kadyrov asked him to take the post of Prime Minister of Chechnya (which Kadyrov now occupies). Makhachev said he agreed to consider the offer and will consult with friends and allies. We expressed surprise at the offer (Makhachev is an Avar, not a Chechen), and Makhachev replied that Kadyrov listens to him out of respect for the relationship Makhachev had with Kadyrov's late father. During the first Chechen war, Makhachev explained, Makhachev hid Kadyrov senior from the Federal forces who were seeking him as a rebel leader. Makhachev continued the close relationship with Ramzan, who drove from Chechnya to Dagestan in August to attend the wedding of Makhachev's son (reftel).

¶3. (SBU) Trial balloons for the appointment have been appearing regularly in the Russian press. Most recent is a November 1 article in Kommersant portraying a groundswell of enthusiasm for Kadyrov's presidency at a session of the "Assembly of the Peoples of Chechnya" under way in Groznyy.

¶4. (C) Comment: Personal ties mean everything in the Caucasus, not least the personal ties between Kadyrov and Putin. Only such ties can explain why Putin would remove Alkhanov, one of the few counterweights to Kadyrov, and stake everything on such an unpredictable -- and potentially uncontrollable -- leader of the restive republic.
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